

CHAPTER - I

INTRODUCTION

T.S. Eliot is a great force in modern English literature. His literary career covers a period of over forty-five years. His work comprises poetry, drama and prose, the latter including his social and literary criticism as well as his journalism. His entire corpus of work shows that his attitude is religious.

T.S. Eliot's career presents a number of paradoxes that are resolved on a further plane. He is an American who leaves his native land with its democratic values, to go back to his ancestral Europe with its hierarchical cultures which he believes to be degenerate; he is a thinker who is acutely conscious of the materiality of the world, but educated in Bradley's idealism, according to which neither the subject nor the object is real, but only the spiritual entities which transcend them; he is a sceptic who doubts so seriously that he cannot tolerate indifference; he is a literary critic who assesses the importance of literature in terms of its practice in discipleship or antagonism, in the light of a religious system; and he is a poet who sees poetry as "the emotional equivalent of thought" and states that it cannot be practised without an intellectual discipline as stringent as that of philosophy. There is a duality in each case, but each duality is resolved: his pursuit of the emotional origins of culture takes him beyond the immaturity of America

and the degeneracy of Europe; his belief that the great dilemmas are spiritual overcomes his internal distaste for the oppression of external matter; his faith in the viability of spiritual search carries him beyond his private scepticism and despair of public indifference, and his sense that poetry is below religion in a hierarchy of disciplines is for him a more logical justification for its existence than any pursuit of poetry as an absolute can be.

In his entire corpus of work, he champions a reinstatement of the religious view of life. And the central theme of his poetry is religion that gradually varies in nature from the early phase to the later phase of his poetry. The study of this religious theme in Eliot's poetry is significant for the readers of modern poetry in general and those of Eliot in particular. It also becomes a subject of special interest for those who endeavour to trace the development of the poet's mind in his works, especially in his poetry. There have been a large number of critical works, research works, papers and articles on different aspects of Eliot's poetry. But the religious aspect of his poetry has not been adequately considered and has remained lop-sided. Many critics and scholars have refused to take this aspect seriously and have dealt with it partially. Critics like Elizabeth Drew, Helen Gardner, D.E.S. Maxwell, Kristian Smidt have pointed out this aspect in their books, but it has not emerged prominently

inter alia. John D. Margolis in his T.S. Eliot's Intellectual Development, 1922-1939 and Lyndall Gordon in his two books Eliot's Early Years (1978) and Eliot's New Life (1988) have made casual references to his religion. V.K.Roy's T.S. Eliot; Quest for Belief is a study of Eliot's poetry and drama from a broad socio-historical perspective. Though the author's convictions are never in doubt the account seems to suffer from a lack of proper focus. A.N. Dwivedi, D. Ghosh and C.M. Kearns have examined the Indian thought in Eliot's poetry, which becomes only a partial study of his treatment of religion. Critics like E.K. Hay and R. Crawford have examined this aspect of his poetry from a Christian bias.

Many critics like I.A. Richards have pointed out Eliot's preoccupation with sex. One cannot but notice this preoccupation with sex, and sometimes gathers the impression "that sex is regarded as in itself evil and sinful". But this impression seems to be exaggerated when one considers the sinfulness of sex as a matter of Christian doctrine or philosophy. If one leaves the doctrine of Original Sin, which may have a particular application to sex, there is no such teaching in the theology to which Eliot subscribes. Kristian Smidt has rightly stated:

Catholic dogma, despite the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception, does not regard sexual intercourse as in itself tainted or sinful.

Anglican theology, as expounded in Doctrine in the Church of England, emphatically does not¹.

Eliot had nothing in his mind contrary to the Christian faith, and his allusions to sex seem to be nearer the oriental ideas of desire as suffering and spiritual isolation. He simply highlights the abuse of sex resulting in spiritual exhaustion.

In course of his analysis of the modern mind, Eliot contends :

One might think that sex and religion were 'problem' like Free Trade and Imperial Preference; it seems odd that the human race should have gone on for so many thousand years before it suddenly realised that religion and sex, one right after the other, presented problems².

Even he finds that his contemporaries are occupied with religion whether they call themselves churchmen or rationalists, agnostics or social revolutionaries. Religion is neither fanaticism nor a craze; it is in the blood of man. What, however, he objects to is sectarianism in poetry. Since Eliot is conscious of his

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1. Krishtian Smidt, Poetry and Belief in the work of T.S. Eliot (London : Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1961), p. 195.
 2. The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism (London: Faber and Faber, 1980), p. 127.

duty as an artist he does not hold any view that directly marks off one kind of poetry from another as distinctly religious by assigning some special traits. His sense of religion is closely related to his sense of history (a sense of timeless as well as of temporal) which has imparted universality and comprehensiveness to his visions.

It would be erroneous to think that Eliot had been passionate and sexy upto a certain period of his life and then he became an Anglo-Catholic, as Edmund Wilson does in his learned treatise by observing that "the ascetic shrinking from sexual experience and the distress at the drying up of the springs of sexual emotion, with the straining after a religious emotion which may be made to take its place"³. Edmund Wilson is stating only one half of a general truth in his observation that "the drying up of the springs of sexual emotion" may cause "straining after a religious emotion which may be made to take its place". It may be maintained with equal justice that the drying up of the springs of the religious emotion brings a straining after sexual emotion which may be made to take its place. One may gain very

3. Axel, S Castel : A Study of the Imaginative Literature of 1870-1930 (London: Collins and Fontana, 1971) p. 105.

little from either explanation. In any case, the "interest in metaphysics, and in religious emotions, positive or negative, are as original in Eliot's poetry as his interest in sexual emotions"⁴. One may admit, as Eliot does, "a connection as in an ascending scale between sexual love and divine love". This, however, does not make either a substitute for the other. So his poetry "is not essentially sinful except in being an important part of life in general and sharing the general burden of original sin"⁵.

Hence arises the idea of the thesis - Religious Thoughts In Eliot's Poetry. This thesis attempts to evaluate various types of religious thoughts that have worked out at different stages of his poetic life. Since the thesis is concerned with the theme of religion, it is worthwhile to have some conception about religion along with its treatment in modern English poetry.

The word "religion" comes from the Latin word, religio, which means "bind together". Man does not live by bread alone. He has to solve his problems by developing his faith in the cosmic power which sustains the whole universe. While discussing the roots of religion in the human soul, John Baillie points out:

4. K. Smidt, op. cit., p. 196.

5. Idem.

Religion is a consciousness which comes to the dutiful, to the loyal, to those who are true to the highest values they know, that in being thus dutiful and loyal to their values they are doing what they were meant and appointed to do, and are putting themselves in line with the Eternal and have his backing behind them⁶.

So man has always been identified with the Creator.

Later, many have defined religion differently. William James defines religion as "the feeling, acts and experiences of individual men in their solitude, so far as they apprehend themselves to stand in relation to whatever they may consider the divine"⁷. "Religion", says G.T.W. Patrick, "is a feeling of dependence upon the unseen powers which control our destiny, accompanied by a desire to come into friendly relations with them"⁸. A.N. Whitehead observes:

Religion is the vision of something which stands beyond, behind and within, the passing flux of immediate things; something which is real, and yet waiting to be realised; something which is a remote possibility, and yet the greatest of present facts; something that gives meaning to all that passes, and

6. The Roots of Religion in the Human Soul (New York : Loran, 1926), pp. 112-113.

7. The Varieties of Religious Experience : A Study in Human Nature (New York: The Modern Literary, 1929), pp. 31-32.

8. Introduction to Philosophy; Revised Edition (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1968), p. 37.

yet eludes apprehension; something whose possession is the final good, and yet is beyond all reach; something which is the ultimate ideal, and the hopeless quest⁹.

Whitehead, therefore, regards religion as a quest which is thought hopeless but worth pursuing because it is with the help of religion that man is able to see beyond his limited life. W.H. Kilpatrick defines religion as "the spirit with which one holds one's supreme-value - the value in terms of which one values all else - plus the outworking of this attitude appropriately in life — a unifying of one's self and one's life on the basis of some supreme and inclusive outlook and consequent programme of action"¹⁰. Hence he considers religion as a means of attaining an appropriate attitude in life which will enable a person to find unity between the self and his actions. Thus there are numerous definitions and views of religion. But most of these definitions and views emphasize one aspect or another of religion to the exclusion of others.

Religion is still in the process of growing and until its growth is complete no adequate definition of it can be found. It is again a very ambiguous term for it means not only different things to different people, but also different things to the same

9. Science and the Modern World : Lowell Lectures, 1925 (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1964), p. 275.

10. Source Book in the Philosophy of Education (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1951), p. 1.

people at different times. So the most comprehensive definition of religion is as follows:

[It is] is the belief in a supernatural power or powers, belief in a god or gods, especially such belief as entails acts of worship on the part of the believer; a developed system of philosophical, theological, and ethical opinions, tenets and theories depending ultimately and essentially upon a belief in a deity or deities, and the necessity of worshipping that deity or those deities¹¹.

And the different aspects of religion may be arranged in some such orders as follows : ritual; dogma; hagiology; ethnics, philosophy, metaphysics; and mysticism.

A man is apt to stress now one aspect, then another, in response to the pressure of the prevalent mood. As he goes up the scale, he seems to touch the less particular and more universal aspects of religion. Rituals and dogmas differ widely and even entertainingly, and the same religion is sometimes driven to modify them to suit changing circumstances. Hagiology can likewise dwindle into sectarianism; but by themselves, and judged by their visions, experiences and outpourings, the saints are for all and speak to all, and they are verily ambassadors of the Absolute. Again, ethical systems show interesting variations, while the world views of the different religions agree only profoundly to disgrace.

11. Cited in K. R. S. Iyengar's The Adventure of Criticism (Bombay : Asia Publishing House, 1962), pp. 166-167.

and a single religion may comfortably harbour several darsanas or schools of philosophy, all apparently consistent with the mystical experiences of their founders, inspires and sustainers. Although particular religions attempt to appropriate exclusively this or that saint, the saints themselves as a class are in a category apart, their lives follow a pattern of their own and their mystical experiences have an almost identical flavour and cast. Interpretations vary; they wrangle and divide. But institutions abide; they unify and harmonize.

The spirit of religion is, more or less, found in English Poetry from the Anglo-Saxon period to the modern age. A large number of modern poets - G.M. Hopkins (1844-1889), Francis Thompson (1860-1907), W.B. Yeats (1865-1939), George Russell (1867-1935), Charlotte Mew (1869-1927), G.K. Chesterton (1874-1936), Alfred Noyes (1880-1958), T.S. Eliot (1888-1965) and Robert Graves (1895-), to name only a few, have kept alive the flame of religion in their poetry. G.M. Hopkins glorifies God and his own soul in the early poems. He has outsoared the shadow to the dark night of the soul and he has regained his lost faith in God in his poem "That Nature is a Heraclitean Fire, and of the comfort of the Resurrection". He sees all Nature consumed to ashes and his soul alone standing imperishable like an "immortal diamond". Francis Thompson is a genuine mystic like Blake and his mystical attitude finds best expression in "The Hound of Heaven" and "In No strange Land". W.B. Yeats has been deeply interested in the teaching of the Upanishads and

the poetry of Tagore and Blake. His poems— "All Soul's Night", "The Double Vision of Michael Robertes" and "Sailing to Byzantium" depict his spiritualistic experience and visions. George Russell, known as AE, is the pivot of the Dublin Theosophical Movement which made a great impact on the Irish Literary Revival. This significant movement led him to pursue the mystical teachings of the East and the psychology of mystical experience. Most of his poem like "QM", "Indian", "Krishna" and "Fire" reveal his mystical attitude. Charlotte Mew's early poems explore religious suffering (in the form of martyrdom), punishment, death, sorrow, loss and love. Her main achievement, "Madeleine in Church", depicts a religious theme. G.K. Chesterton is a devout Roman catholic and there are solemn and serious touches of religion in his poetry. He has brought the spirit of Catholicism in English poetry particularly in his hymns and war ballads, as in "Ballad of White Horse" and "The House of Christmas". Alfred Noyes was a Christian by faith, and in joyous verse he has sung "The Lord of Life is risen again and Love is Lord of all". Robert Graves presents the omnipotence and omniscience of God in his poem "In The Wilderness".

Among the religious poets of the modern age T.S. Eliot deserves an important place, for he has made a vital and substantial contribution to the field of modern religious poetry. He has made a provocative remark that he is a "classicist in literature, Anglo-Catholic in religion, royalist in politics"¹².

12. T.S. Eliot, For Lancelet Andrewes (London, 1928), p. IX.

He is an Anglo-Catholic in an irreligious world around him.

England has enjoyed a long era of peace, prosperity and progress during the reign of Queen Victoria and her empire, which had grown into an unimaginably large size where the sun never set, acted as a shock absorber of the seething social discontents at home. Blind optimism was the leading feature of the victorian attitude to life and it seemed to overpower the strain of pessimism which, however, was only skin-deep. All contradictions and conflicts of ideas and beliefs were somehow resolved in forceful compromises. The conflict between science and religion since the publication of Darwin's The Origin of Species (1859) had been patched up in the interest of the empire which, as Kipling thought, appeared to be destined to last for ever. The spirit of the age has been justly summed up in these lines:

[We are] wandering between two worlds, one dead
The other powerless to be born¹³.

The economic prosperity of England increased by leaps and bounds between 1902 and 1914 and it came easily to be regarded as politically the most stable and militarily the mightiest nation in Europe. But the rot had set in the vital entrails of the national life it could be described as the decay of the religious sense of life, or the decay of spiritual values. Materialism was the supreme God, materialism in any of its manifested

13. Matthew Arnold, "Stanzas from the Grande Chartreuse" in An Arnold Verse Selection, ed. by Douglas Grant : (London: Macmillan & Co. Ltd., 1937), p. 163.

forms - capitalism, imperialism or socialism. The industrial revolution had reached the optimum point : even the rural areas of England had become in a sense, urbanized, for most values and assumptions of the people of these areas were determined as in the cities, by "the enlarged role of money". It was money, not human affections, that came to determine the human relationships. Individuals did not matter; they must submit themselves to the levelling collective interests of the economic groups and classes. The prestige and greatness of a man depended upon his wealth and riches, not upon the qualities of his mind and heart, nor upon his moral and religious beliefs, for both morality and religion had been subjugated to the function or merely justifying money-making as the highest goal of life. The situation has been described as follows:

What was demoralizing... because it bred a poisonous cynicism about human relations, was the making and breaking of personal friendships according to temporary and accidental circumstances in no way connected with personal merit ; gracious appreciation and insistent intimacy being succeeded, when failure according to worldly standards occurred, by harsh criticism and cold avoidance¹⁴.

14. G.H. Bantock, "The Social and Intellectual Background.
 "The Modern Age (ed. Boris Ford), p. 15.

Naturally, all this led to the erosion of spiritual values and religious beliefs, to the state of sterility of heart and soul, and generated the feeling of loneliness, of being tied to the impersonal and wayward economic forces. The certainties of the Victorian age gradually gave way to feelings of doubt and uncertainty. This unsettling effect had been hastened by the discoveries of Freud in the sphere of psychology, Bergson in the realm of philosophy, Einstein in the realm of natural science and Picasso in the realm of painting. Irrationality came to be regarded as being fundamental to the human nature.

It was all the more obvious during the First World War : for despite the sway of reason and logic, despite all round prosperity, optimism and sanity of the rulers, England, too, was drawn to the First World War. The irrational in man had triumphed, or rather the irrational in the most rationally organized machine-civilization. While the old generation in England continued to believe in authoritarianism and a code of rationally controlled behaviour, the young generation infected with the new discoveries and fresh realizations tended to rebel against all forms of authority in politics, in morality, and even religion. When the wild fires of the First World War were raging in Europe, the London of 1915 finds expression in D.H.Lawrence's description:

It was in 1915 the old world ended. In the winter of 1915-16 the spirit of the old London collapsed; the city, in some way, perished, perished from being the

heart of the world, and became a vortex of broken passions, lusts, hopes, fears, and horrors. The integrity of London collapsed and the genuine debasement began — The well-bred, really cultured classes were on the whole passive resisters. They shirked their duty. It is the business of people who really know better to fight tooth and nail to keep up a standard, to hold control of authority¹⁵.

But the most faithful and effective portrait of the age is to be found in the following lines:

Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;
 Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,
 The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere
 The ceremony of the innocence is drained;
 The best lack all conviction, while the worst
 Are full of passionate intensity¹⁶.

Consequent upon all these, there is a profound despair in man. He finds himself unfixed, his hold on the Universe becomes insecure. Since he has given him infinite power for destruction and it has been difficult for him, without corresponding moral or spiritual equipment, to curb his lust for wielding power. Since the religious atmosphere was totally disturbed, men and women busied themselves in the accumulation of worldly pleasures.

15. Kangaroo, quoted by G.H. Bantock, op. cit., p. 18.

16. W.B. Yeats, "The Second Coming", quoted in the The New Oxford Book of English Verse, (chosen and edited by Helen Gardner) (Oxford : Clarendon Press, 1972), p. 820.

Christianity or the "Revealed Religion" was solely confined to soothe the suffering of modern man with the Sunday service. It was rationally indefensible; a sustaining faith had disappeared from earth. Such Christian concepts as Atonement, Heaven and Hell were also shaken with the growth of liberal humanism.

This was the time when Eliot began to write poetry. But he neither escaped nor did he fall back on an outworn tradition. Rather having recourse to the new psychology and anthropology of men like Miss Jessie L. Weston and Frazer, he developed an intensely social outlook and perspective. An American by birth and training, he was sufficiently detached to express the city world of the latter day industrial civilization with its psychological uncertainties and spiritual ennui. "The background to Eliot's early poetry is a secular temporal world in which religious belief has become impossible"¹⁷. And the primary theme that stirred Eliot's poetry into intellectual movement was the barrenness of man's contemporary estate or in one phrase "death in life".

In 1928, Eliot declared himself to be an Anglo-Catholic in religion. But he had never given any account of his religious conversion. He has been too reserved and fastidious to wear his heart on his sleeve. All the evidence indicates a slow realization

17. Stephen Spender, Eliot (Glasgow : Fontana Press, 1986), p. 14.

of the need for Christian beliefs. While his faith seemed to have crystallized in 1926, he felt that the vitality and experimental verve of the twenties was the last kick of an old world dying on its feet rather than the beginning of a fresh era¹⁸. He realized that there was a necessity for faith, discipline and re-thinking. He found that "the Christian scheme seemed the only possible scheme which found a place for values which I must maintain or perish (and belief comes first and practice second), the belief, for instance, in holy living and holy dying, in sanctity, chastity, humility, austeritiy"¹⁹. Here it is worthwhile to point out that with all such conversions there has to be an event or anything else however trivial in itself, which gives the final turn of the key. In Eliot's case, it "was his reading of Bertrand Russel's A Free Man's Worship which as the pure milk of humanism so revolted him that he took the opposite direction with alacrity"²⁰. Besides, the influence of his Irish Roman Catholic nurse should be taken into consideration in this period of his life.

Sin is an integral part of human existence. It is Original Sin, the heritage of mankind. It is apparent that belief in Original Sin, and in man's inability to perfect himself, those beliefs that had corroded his humanism, now became the starting

18. The Criterion, Last Words, Jan., 1939, p. 271.

19. "Christianity and Communism" in The Listener, March 16, 1932.

20. H.M. Williams, The Waste Land and Other Poems (Calcutta: K. L. Mukhopadhyay, 1965), p. 23.

point of his religious faith. It is also obvious that there is a strong connection between his choice of Anglo Catholic religion and his declared classicism in literature and royalism in politics. All three systems were based on authority, dogma, discipline and a degree of ritual or formalism. His religion was to be ritualistic and Catholic, his politics was to be anti-democratic and based on respect for hereditary principles and rituals (Kingship), and his literary canons were to be those of Dryden, Pope and Dr. Johnson rather than those of Wordsworth and Shelley, with emphasis, in other words, on reason, the universal and the impersonal²¹.

It is true that Eliot had been always religious. If fact, the word "religious" might have sufficed to describe his attitude if he had been living in the thirteenth century Europe when Christianity meant the acceptance of a set of doctrines dogmatically taught by a church which represented God on earth. But in the modern century "religious" is likely to be used to describe more an attitude or emotion than the acceptance of a body of doctrines. It explains why Eliot declared himself as an Anglo-Catholic in religion many years after his adolescence. He came of a Unitarian family. To him, "religion meant the submission of the individual to the idea of the absolute imposed as dogma"²².

21. Idem.

22. Stephen Spender, op. cit., p. 14.

Naturally, in his entire work there is the search for the merging of individual consciousness within some wider objective truth - at first the tradition, next the idea of supernatural, and finally the dogmas of the Catholic Church.

T.S. Eliot was intellectually attracted to Roman and Anglican Catholic theology. But "the whole bent of his religion was towards mysticism - a phenomenon common to Catholicism, Protestantism, and Indian religions alike"²³. A mystic seeks direct illumination from union with God through persistent and often painful religious exercises. Eliot was largely interested in the mystics of the early Christian Church, the Desert Mystics and in the mystics of the Medieval Church including Julian of Norwich and the anonymous author of The Cloud of Unknowing. Moreover, he was interested in another mystic, St. John of the Cross. All these mystics used strikingly similar language to express their mystical experiences, all speaking of a "negative way" of approaching God. It meant rejection of everything which was not God, a dark night of the soul - a time of desolation - followed by the climax of the unspeakable rapture of unity with God.

Religion has been the nucleus of Eliot's work in general and his poetry in particular. It runs throughout his poetry from the beginning to the end. Stephen Spender has justly observed;

23. H.M. Williams, op. cit., p. 25.

.... Eliot's poetry is the spiritual record of a poet who progressed from an ironically viewed individualist attitude of aestheticism, through the despair of realizing that modern man is totally conditioned by the break down of values in the society in which he lives, to the idea of the city which is not of this world but of God ; an idea for which he found confirmation in the Confessions of St. Augustine and in The Divine Comedy.²⁴

Religion is, in fact, the connecting link between the early phase and the later phase of Eliot's poetry. While his approach to religion is negative in his early poetry, it gradually becomes positive in the later poetry.

Eliot's poems written in his early youth reflect the religious bent of his mind. In Prufrock and Other Observations (1917), his approach to religion is that of a satirist; the evils of preoccupation with the material and the worldly, to the exclusion of the spiritual, are exposed and ridiculed. The Satire and scorn in these early poems indicate his contempt for the secular life and a leaning towards the religious life. His second volume entitled Poems (1920) contains some Christian poems. "Gerontion", the most representative poem of this volume, depicts the causes of decay and corruption which, according to the poet,

24. Op. cit., p. 16.

are less of Christian faith and moral values, the wrong assumption of history, the distortion of values, the evils of rationalism, the crying of spiritual resources, the futility of artificial stimulants like wine and sex and the inevitability of decay and death. The Waste Land (1922) is a composite picture of all these other poems put together. Here the poet traces the corruption and degeneration of contemporary Western civilization to spiritual sterility and decay, and upholds the message of Lord Buddha and the Upanishads as a remedy for its ills. It has been justly stated that "there is the rumble of distant thunder and the hint of rain and renewal and redemption at the end [of the poem], so that one is left with the hope that the parched lands of the Fisher King and the Saharas of the human soul and heart will soon be quickened into new life by the downpour from Above"²⁵.

The poet gradually changes his mode of treating religion in the subsequent poems. "The Hollow Men" (1925) is a meditation on the subject of human nature in this world and on the relationship of this world to another, the world of death or eternity. In this poem the hollow men have become aware of their spiritual emptiness, and such awareness is the notable step towards spiritual re-birth. The Aerial Poems presents a significant development in this respect. "Journey of the Magi" (1927) and "A Song for Simeon"

25. K. R. S. Iyengar, op. cit., p. 621.

(1928) dramatically deal with the religious theme, the promise of salvation. The liturgical note characteristic of "Ash-Wednesday" appears at the end of "Animula" (1929) and "Marina" (1930) is the triumphal realization of joy in the human relationship. The changed manner becomes explicit in Ash-wednesday (1930), a poem of repentance and renunciation. Its various sections are a ritualistic chanting working through the personal desire for oblivion towards some universal statement of the meaning of death in life, and life in death. The poem never achieves ecstasy of that type of mysticism which frees one, momentarily, from the awareness of anything else but the vision. "Marina" and Ash-Wednesday were composed in the same year and it should be noted that "Marina" is the bridge between Ash-wednesday and Four Quartets. The entire "poem [Marina]" is penetrated with the Christian hope, the fulfilment of the promise 'Behold I make all things new' "26.

Four Quartets, the most mature work of the poet, endeavours to present a fleeting glimpse of his vision of the eternal truth and to communicate poetically man's spiritual quest for the realization of this truth. As Eliot himself puts it :

26. Helen Gardner, The Art of T.S. Eliot, (London: Faber and Faber, 1968, rpt. 1972), p. 126.

Men's curiosity and searches past and future
 And clings to that dimension. But to apprehend
 The Point of intersection of the timeless
 With time, is an occupation for the saint²⁷.

To understand this eternal truth that "the point of intersection of the timeless with time" is, no doubt, the chief pre-occupation for the saints. This spiritual exploration into time and eternity is an integral part of the questionings of the intellectual soul in its attempt towards the realization of the Unknown. Thus Four quartets becomes the most religious and philosophical achievement of Eliot. If The Waste Land is Eliot's Inferno, Ash-Wednesday may be justly called his purgatorio and Four quartets his paradiso.

The spirit of religion is found in Eliot's plays, too. His first play The Rock (1934) deals with the theme of religion and society. Murder in the Cathedral (1935) deals with the Martyrdom of Thomas Becket; it is a study of the significance of martyrdom. The Family Reunion (1939) is a play about the hero's discovery of his religious vocation as the result of his sense of guilt and contrition about the death of his wife, whom he believes himself to have pushed overboard from a liner in mid-Atlantic. The Cocktail Party (1950) presents the horror of loneliness and meaninglessness of life without mutual understanding on the one hand, and, on the other, repentance and atonement,

27. T.S. Eliot, The Complete Poems and Plays of T.S. Eliot (London: Faber and Faber, 1969), p. 189-190. Hereinafter cited as CP.

through which belief in Christian love within marriage and saintly martyrdom is affirmed. In The Confidential Clerk (1954), Eggeron, the retiring clerk who is devoted to his "garden" is a true Christian who can minister to the needs of the spiritually elect Colby and help him make a start for an honest religious career. His last play, The Elder Statesman (1959) depicts the picture of Lord Claverton's progress towards salvation through recognition of his sin and confession of the dark secrets to his angelic daughter Monica. It seems that three experiments in Eliot's dramas are closely related to the three stages in his poetic and religious development²⁸.

It is now worthwhile to state that the present thesis comprises nine chapters including this introduction and the conclusion. The second and the third chapters are devoted to the background of Eliot's religious thoughts and the study of his prose works from the religious point of view respectively. The fourth, the fifth and the sixth chapters present the central part of the thesis, which involves the study of Eliot's poetry from the religious standpoint under the heading "The Boredom", "The Horror" and "The Glory" respectively. Since Eliot's dramas form an integral part of his poetry, the seventh chapter has been devoted to the study of his dramatic works from ~~the~~ same standpoint. The eighth chapter is exclusively on his use of religious images and symbols in his poetry. And the final chapter focuses the readers' attention on the conclusion of the thesis.

28. Helen Gardner, The Art of T.S. Eliot, Op. cit., p. 119.